



**VOTERS FOR  
ANIMAL RIGHTS**

786 Jefferson Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11221  
[vfar.org](http://vfar.org)

## 2021 Borough President Candidate Questionnaire

### **About Us**

Launched in 2017, Voters For Animal Rights (VFAR) is a New York based 501c(4) grassroots multi-issue animal advocacy organization that is building political power for animals. In 2020, VFAR helped elect our former board member, Jabari Brisport, to the New York State Senate. In 2019, VFAR led the successful campaign to ban foie gras in NYC, to stop wild bird poaching and to establish an Office of Animal Welfare within the Mayor's Office. In 2017 we led the campaign to ban the use of wild animals in circuses in NYC. We look forward to working with you to win more victories for animals and make New York City a leader in compassionate public policy.

Our mission is to help elect candidates who support animal protection, lobby for stronger laws to stop animal cruelty, and hold elected officials accountable to humane voters. VFAR mobilizes public concern for animals through the political process. We know that animal protection is not only a moral issue but a bi-partisan political issue as well. Over 90% of Americans believe that animals need protection from abuse and exploitation. To that end, we organize humane voters to support candidates that care about animals. If you support animals, then we want to support you! There are over 60,000 humane voters throughout New York state, hundreds of which are volunteers for VFAR who are ready to knock on doors, make phone calls and get out the vote to elect people who will stand up for animals. We deliver the vote – for the animals and for you.

As an example, here is our [animal-friendly voter guide](#) from the 2020 NYS General Elections.

### Endorsement Process

Candidates seeking VFAR's endorsement for the 2021 Borough President primary elections are required to fill out this questionnaire, which will be posted on our website. Submit to [woof@vfar.org](mailto:woof@vfar.org) by **November 27, 2020**. Please let us know if you need more time.

### Questions

If you have any questions about the topics in our questionnaire, please don't hesitate to reach out to Allie Feldman Taylor, [allie@vfar.org](mailto:allie@vfar.org) and David Karopkin, [david@vfar.org](mailto:david@vfar.org). We are happy to help you better understand animal protection policy, and we're happy to advise your campaign.



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**Candidate Contact Information & Campaign Information**

Candidate Name Jo Anne Simon

Pronouns she/her/hers

Cell Phone [REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]

Campaign Contact: Susannah Pasquantonio

Pronouns she/her/hers

Cell Phone [REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]

Borough: Brooklyn

Party: Democratic

Office Sought: Brooklyn Borough President

Name of Campaign Committee: Simon for Brooklyn

Campaign Office Address: 99 Park Avenue, Suite 1510, New York, NY 10016 (not a field office)

Campaign Website: [www.simonforbrooklyn.com](http://www.simonforbrooklyn.com)

Social Media Handles (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram): <https://twitter.com/JoAnneSimonBK52>  
<https://www.facebook.com/simon.joanne> / <https://www.instagram.com/simonforbrooklyn/>

Occupation or Employer: NYS Assemblymember, 52nd AD.

As a brief introduction to who I am, I am a longtime community activist, a disability rights lawyer, and a progressive legislator for the last 6 years. I am also a former teacher of the deaf. I have worked to give Brooklyn's communities a voice in the decisions that affect their lives, reduce gun violence, promote environmental justice, increase affordable housing, fight sexual harassment, reform election laws, improve transit and street safety, and improve access to education. You can read [my bio here](#).

Organizational Affiliations (if any):

I am a member of the Boerum Hill Association, the Park Slope Civic Council, and the Brooklyn



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Heights Association, as well as numerous bar associations (NYSBA, Brooklyn Bar Assoc., Brooklyn Women's Bar, NELA/NY, Disability Rights Bar Association, and am a founding member of the Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD). I work actively with groups dedicated to building community in the Assembly District I represent, including the Carroll Garden Association and their Southwest Brooklyn Tenants Union, DUMBO Action Committee, Fulton Ferry Landing Assoc., Brooklyn Speaks, Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council, NYCHA TAs, Gowanus Canal Conservancy, and Gowanus Dredgers.

Brooklyn is very fortunate to have a robust network of non-profit legal advocates and social services providers, with whom I collaborate regularly.

I am also a member of several political clubs: Independent Neighborhood Democrats (IND), Central Brooklyn Neighborhood Democrats (CBID), Lambda Independent Democrats (LID), 504 Democrats, and I have been a member of NKD in the past.

Endorsements (if any): 504 Democrats, a disability rights political club has just endorsed me, and I will be making that announcement publicly soon. I also anticipate a few other endorsements this month, and more in the new year. I launched my campaign in October and have just recently started the endorsement process. Fortunately, most groups are also just starting the endorsement process now, opting to begin after the November general election.



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### **Personal Initiatives**

1. Do you feel that promoting the humane treatment of animals should be a priority for the Borough President?

Yes. While ensuring that our city is safe and healthy from COVID-19, and re-building from the resulting recession that has devastated so many, the Borough President can highlight the connection between animal rights and our health, the climate crisis, labor protections, and empathy for one another and other living creatures.

2. What achievements or advocacy for animals are you most proud of, e.g. supporting humane legislation, adopting a shelter pet, volunteering with an animal rescue organization, supporting any national or local animal protection orgs, living a plant-based (vegan or vegetarian) lifestyle, etc.? Did you grow up with or currently live with any companion animals?

I am very proud of the advocacy work that I have done as a disability civil rights attorney to ensure the rights of people with disabilities in connection with their service animals (see, for example: <https://nysba.org/app/uploads/2020/02/A-Guide-to-The-Use-of-Service-Animals-in-New-York-State.pdf>). Service animals provide such an important role as a companion to people, and a significant role helping people engage in activities that would not otherwise be possible.

During my tenure in the Assembly, I have co-sponsored many bills supporting the rights of animals and ensuring proper treatment of animals. I have often looked to animal rights leaders for guidance, and to amplify their message and support their bills. I've cosponsored [S4234A/A6298A](#) (Gianaris / Rosenthal) to ban the sale of dogs, cats and rabbits in pet stores unless they come from a shelter or rescue; [A8554/S7971](#) (Rosenthal/Addabbo) which would prohibit rodeo cruelty; [A3673/S5408](#) (Englebright/Martinez) which would prohibit the NYS DEC from issuing permits or licenses that would authorize wild animals to appear in circuses; [A9775/S4253B](#) (Glick/Martinez) and [S7542/A722B](#) (Martinez/Serrano) to ban killing contests in New York State, and several other bills.

Yes, I have lived with the animals in the past though I have no animals now.

3. What animal issues will you prioritize and lead on as Borough President? How would you work to empower the animal advocacy community to reach new success and growth into the 2022-2025 term, and ensure that New York is on the forefront of animal protection?

As Borough President, I will focus on the connections between animal rights and climate change, including the importance of moving to a plant-based diet and that impact on our planet. As we rebuild from COVID, I will also focus on the importance of our empathy for one another and for living creatures, especially the critical role animals have played as our companions during the COVID-19 quarantines.

This last year, we have witnessed the significant mental health impacts of COVID-19, and it laid bare many existing gaps and inequities in our mental health care system. Animals were such a source of comfort and often the sole companions for so many. It is a good opportunity to examine how we treat





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them when it is clear they have given so much to so many people who were quite alone. In addition, a public health pandemic is a sensible time to focus on a healthier lifestyle both through physical activity and through healthier eating habits that are more plant-based. Further, we know from multiple studies that children who grow up with pets, whether in the home or in classrooms, have fewer allergies and learn vital lessons on empathy, consent, even on life and death.

While we are building back our city, we ought to reflect on what is important to us and how to envision a more vibrant, even better Brooklyn. That is a key goal of mine. Over the last year, we have seen the gaps in our healthcare system, and the inequities in the workforce, as so many essential workers have worked in person during the pandemic without proper safety protections. We have also seen the impacts of the climate crisis, particularly as the west has been ravaged by wildfires. The connection between our environment, our health, workers rights, and animals rights is strong.

There are many animal rights bills that you have identified in your policy agenda that I believe are quite achievable and that will help us treat animals more humanely. I am looking forward to working with the animal rights community to bring your expertise in this area together with my background in community activism and legislative success.

4. Do you have, or would you consider developing, a platform on animal protection issues and posting the information onto your campaign website to outline your positions? If you receive an endorsement from VFAR, will you promote our endorsement on your website and social media pages?

Yes, I would be very open to developing a platform on animal protection issues and posting it online. I would be thrilled to post any endorsement on my social media, and I did post the endorsement that I received from VFAR for my Assembly campaign.

5. Will you commit to designating a member of your staff to handle animal issues?

Jo Ann Van Slyke in my Albany office is my contact on animals rights issues in the Assembly, however, all my staff are animal people. Over the last year, I've employed people who are vegan, people who have rescued animals and adopted them from shelters, and a staff member who refers to herself as a "proud bunny aunt." As Borough President, I would certainly be on the lookout for animal-friendly staff to act as a liaison on these issues. That being said, most of the Borough Hall staff are civil service employees who would be staying on through the next term. It may well be the perfect liaison on animal issues is already there.

6. Do you believe that the pursuit of animal rights is part of a broader vision of social justice? Please explain your answer.

Yes, absolutely. I will do my best to support animal rights champions, and push for legislation that VFAR deems essential, and ways in which we can foster animal rights protections that are also connected to labor justice, environmental protections and a more plant-based and earth-friendly diet.



**Positions on Legislation and Policy**

**1. New York City's Companion Animals**

**A. Increased Funding for ACC and Independent Animal Rescue Organizations**

Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC) is a non-profit organization contracted with the New York City Department of Health to manage New York City's three full-service municipal animal shelters located in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island, as well as two admissions centers located in the Bronx and Queens. ACC is an open admission shelter required by law to accept every animal brought through its doors and cannot turn away any animal like most other shelters, whether arriving due to homelessness, family crisis, abuse, or abandonment. ACC relies on public funding for operational costs necessary to save and find homes for these animals in need, but resources are needed to ensure that these facilities always have sufficient capacity, staff and other resources to increase adoptions, perform spay and neuter operations, provide pet retention services and other efforts to ensure a successful and humane NYC shelter system.

**Do you pledge to allocate funding to maintain ACC and other non-profit animal rescue organizations?**

**YES**

Additional Comments: As you may imagine, I am not entirely familiar with the specific details of Borough Hall's available funding for programmatic support for non-profit organizations, and more familiar with capital funds available, which may also be needed by these organizations.

**B. Trap Neuter and Release (TNR) of feral cats**

Tens of thousands of stray and feral cats, collectively called community cats, live in the outdoor spaces of New York City. They live in groups called colonies, and they establish themselves near human activity — in backyards, around businesses, in parking lots, etc. — attracted by a food source such as trash or rodents. Community cats have no legal guardian, though many people care for them by feeding and sometimes providing outdoor shelter. These cats are not socialized to humans. They are timid and fearful around people and are not suited for adoption. Because most of these cats are not suited to living indoors, bringing them to a shelter is not the humane answer. Taking them to a shelter also doesn't solve the population problem — if cats are simply removed from an area, others will soon move in and breed. This is called the "Vacuum Effect."

The most humane and effective approach to managing the growing population of community cats is Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). In TNR, entire colonies of community cats are trapped, sterilized, vaccinated, ear tipped, and returned to their territory of origin. TNR halts reproduction and many of the nuisance behaviors associated with unneutered cats, such as yowling, fighting, and marking territory. The cats are healthier, free from the stresses of mating and motherhood. TNR also includes



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colony management to ensure the cats' well-being and their peaceful coexistence with the rest of the community. Community cat programs not only provide life-saving options for cats who might otherwise be euthanized when admitted to a shelter but also can stabilize, and even reduce over time, the population of community cat colonies. Such efforts require support and funding and rely on many thousands of volunteer hours and out-of-pocket expenses incurred by dedicated New Yorkers.

**Do you pledge to support increasing funding to programs that support these community cat operations?**

**YES**

Additional Comments: A good friend has been active in this area for years, and I am also very familiar with this approach through a few of the civic listservs.

## **2. Pursuing a More Humane City: Education, Health Care, and Social Services**

### **A. Pet-Friendly Housing**

As New York City continues to experience a housing affordability crisis with high displacement rates, housing must be accessible to people with companion animals. Keeping people and companion animals together reduces the burden on animal shelters and allowing New Yorkers to stay in their homes. This is a particularly significant concern for especially vulnerable populations such as low-income families, the elderly, and victims of domestic violence. Housing legislation and policy should expand affordable pet friendly housing options as well as the ability of those experiencing homelessness and victims of domestic violence to seek refuge in shelters with their pets.

**Would you support and vote for legislation soon to be introduced (Brannan, Cabrera) which would preserve the right of individuals over the age of 62 to not be denied housing on the basis of having a companion animal?**

**YES.** As Borough President, I would be unable to vote for this and many of the below bills that you outline, but I would certainly support these issues and use the power of the position to advocate and weigh in accordingly.

Additional comments:

### **B. Homeless Services Accommodations for Companion Animals**

Currently, shelters provided by or under contract with the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) do not allow or accommodate pets. Individuals seeking shelter are forced to abandon their animals to be admitted, and thus, often choose to live on city streets. More info [here](#) and [here](#).



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Would you support and vote for [Intro 1483](#) (Levin), which would require the DHS, in collaboration with the Department of Social Services, to develop a plan to accommodate pets of homeless individuals and families with the objective of providing pet-friendly shelters and identifying other temporary pet care arrangements that would allow homeless pet-owners to keep their companion animals?

YES, of course.

Would you support and vote for [Intro 1484](#) (Levin), which would require DHS to report, on a monthly basis, information on the placement or disposition of companion animals that belong to people who enter homeless shelters?

YES.

Additional Comments:

#### **C. Fulfilling New York’s Humane Education Mandate**

Section 809 of the New York State Education Law requires instruction in the “humane treatment and protection of animals ... in every elementary school under state control or supported wholly or partly by public money of the state.” Although there is a penalty for non-compliance, the legislation has remained unenforced, and many educators and administrators are unaware of this statutory requirement. [More info](#).

Would you support and vote for [Intro 1465](#) (Dromm), which would require the Department of Education to report on humane animal treatment instruction in public elementary schools?

YES

Additional Comments:

#### **D. Animals Used for Experimentation: School Hatching Projects**

Principals and school teachers should end the use of bird-hatching projects and replace them with learning activities that teach life processes without the use of live animals. School classroom incubation and hatching projects of baby chicks and ducks is cruel and leads to the abandonment and death of countless young birds each year. Once the eggs develop and the cute baby birds grow up, schools realize that they have no plan for the adult birds. These hatching-project birds are deprived of a mother hen to raise them, which may lead to developmental issues. The birds are often abandoned in city parks where they cannot survive on their own or dumped at local animal shelters and rescues who are already overburdened with unwanted animals.





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Hatching projects encourage the view that animals are disposable objects instead of living creatures requiring a lifetime of care and commitment. Humane alternatives have been developed by the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), HEART, and other humane educators. More info [here](#).

**Would you support and vote for legislation that would prohibit New York City schools from using mail-ordered eggs, live baby chickens and ducks for classroom projects?**

**YES**

As Borough President, I would encourage the cessation of these practices in our schools.

**Would you co-sign a letter urging the NYC Schools Chancellor to ban the use of eggs, live baby chickens and ducks for classroom projects?**

**YES**

Additional Comments:

#### **E. Fireworks**

The booming sounds of fireworks are terrifying and overwhelming for pets and wildlife, as well as for veterans with PTSD, children on the autism spectrum, and survivors of gun violence. [According to the ASPCA](#), more dogs get lost on the Fourth of July than any other day of the year due to panicking and running off. On July 5th shelters notoriously have increased numbers of frightened lost pets. Additionally, baby birds and other infant wildlife become orphaned and starve to death as their parents panic from the sounds and take off. Wildlife are known to race into the road to escape the sounds, resulting in dangerous car collisions. A solution that has been instituted in many cities in Europe and Canada are silent fireworks. Silent fireworks deliver the same beautiful cascading colors but without the daunting decibels and startling explosions. Read more [here](#).

**Would you support and vote for legislation that would require all fireworks displays to be of the silent type?**

**YES**

Additional Comments: I was not familiar with silent fireworks and would like to discuss this with you in more detail, as I have long been concerned with the triggering effects of fireworks and would support efforts to institute silent fireworks.

As you may be aware, several folks in my district near the Brooklyn Bridge and the Barclays Center (and of course across the city) experienced an uptick in fireworks this summer due to what seems to be a few factors - more people at home this summer under quarantine from COVID-19, and the murder of George Floyd and the resulting protests calling for justice and police reform (which I wholeheartedly supported). However, an unintended consequence was that the earlier start to the fireworks and the uptick had an impact on many people and their pets. Many folks in the community shared best practices for how to calm their pets and ways to comfort them, but I agree that it would be



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important to find a way to allow people to celebrate or to protest without impacting people and animals in a harmful way.

### **3. Animals Used For Food**

#### **A. Factory Farms**

As the global COVID-19 pandemic exposes the [dangers inherent](#) in our highly concentrated food system, [legislation](#) introduced by Senator Cory Booker, co-sponsored by Senator Elizabeth Warren, as well as its [House companion](#), introduced by Rep. Ro Khanna, would place a moratorium on new and expanding factory farms and provide a transition for farmers who want to transition out of operating a factory farm. The scale, density, and practices associated with Large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) aka Factory Farms are heinously cruel to animals and present a range of public health, worker safety, and environmental problems.

**Would you support and vote for a New York City Council resolution calling on Congress to adopt [S.3221/H.R.6718](#), legislation to end factory farming?**

**YES**

The Green New Deal is a set of policy proposals that seeks to transform our energy system to 100% renewable energy while creating jobs needed to solve the climate crisis, and ensuring a just transition for workers and vulnerable communities, and has the potential to improve the welfare of countless animals, wild and domestic. The Green New Deal calls for massive investments in weatherization, public transportation, modern infrastructure and high-speed broadband, reducing emissions throughout the world, transitioning to sustainable farming, conserving public lands as wildlife habitat, as well as holding the fossil fuel industry accountable for our current environmental crises.

**Do you support the [New York State](#) and/or [federal Green New Deal legislation](#)?**

**YES**

I am currently a co-sponsor of this legislation in the Assembly. Further, fighting climate change and promoting environmental justice are key issues to me. Climate change, pollution, and the disproportionate burden it places on communities of color cannot be met with half measures. I have fought aggressively and legislatively against the creation of new fossil fuel infrastructures, and for clean energy and the creation of Public Power. I have also stood up against irresponsible development projects that harm the environment. I have long championed the Superfund cleanup in Brooklyn, and was in the forefront of efforts to institute traffic calming and reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. I first advocated for congestion pricing nearly two decades ago. I first worked to bury the polluting Gowanus Expressway decades ago. There is a strong connection between animal rights, protecting our planet and reducing climate change, and I will highlight those issues.

**Do you believe the Green New Deal does enough to address the impact of CAFOs?**



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**YES / NO** I don't know if you are referring to the state or federal bills, and I would appreciate guidance or background on your position on this topic.

**Would you support and vote for [Res. 1151 \(Constantinides\)](#) calling on corporate and government entities operating in New York City to divest from agricultural industries that benefit from deforestation and the acceleration of global warming?**

**YES.**

**What do you believe the Borough President should do to help end factory farming?**

I would consider companion local legislation to the Booker/Khanna bill cited above. This is an area I would want to learn more about before making any specific proposals.

**B. Live Animal Slaughter Markets and Transportation**

There are 80+ slaughterhouses and live animal markets in NYC – more than any other U.S. city. [These facilities in New York are functionally no different than the live animal markets abroad where Coronavirus started.](#) In addition to horrific treatment of animals in these facilities (tiny cages, no vet care, severely limited food and water), these facilities pose a significant health and safety hazard to the community affecting the quality of life for neighborhood residents. Blood, feces, urine, body parts, and feathers are routinely found on our public sidewalks and streets due to the unsanitary conditions associated with slaughterhouses. Many of these slaughterhouses are located close to schools and playgrounds. Of critical concern, these facilities are rarely if ever inspected by regulators, and despite the animal cruelty and other impacts of these facilities, there is no meaningful oversight.

**Especially in light of COVID-19 and the threat of pandemics that are believed to originate from crowded, unsanitary animal markets, would you support and vote for legislation to increase regulations, inspections and reporting requirements for live animal markets and other facilities in New York City where live animals are kept, and increased penalties for health code or animal cruelty violations?**

**YES**

I recently introduced [A.11144](#) which would prohibit certain wildlife and fish from being imported into the state; and amend the Agriculture and Markets law, in relation to live animal markets, thus reducing the likelihood of zoonotic transmission of viruses from wildlife to humans.

**Would you support and vote for legislation that would require licensed slaughterhouses in New York City to have video recording systems in all areas with live animals?**

**YES**

Additional Comments:



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### **C. Shipments of Live Animals**

Small animals such as chicks are regularly shipped through the US Postal Service. This terribly cruel practice is tragically routine. They are not provided with any food and water, and many animals suffer terribly or perish during transit. It is not uncommon for thousands of animals to be transported this way in the same shipment. The result is that animals often [arrive at their destinations dead](#).

**Would you support and vote for legislation that bans or restricts the shipment of live animals into New York City through the mail?**

**YES**

Additional Comments:

### **D. Restaurants**

**Would you support and vote for [Intro. 1405 \(Dromm\)](#), which would offer clarity for consumers who wish to avoid animal-derived food products and allergens?**

This legislation would require the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to establish a food protection course and certification program for restaurants to demonstrate compliance with food allergen safety, and require restaurants to post a sign for customers on food allergen awareness. The bill would also establish a voluntary certification program for food service establishments who advertise themselves as capable of accommodating certain dietary restrictions, such as gluten-free, nut-free, vegetarian, and vegan, among others.

**YES**

Additional Comments:

### **E. Aquatic Animals**

There is widespread scientific consensus that aquatic animals such as fish, lobsters, octopus, squid, and other marine life can experience pain and suffering. Cruel and neglectful treatment of all animals, including aquatic animals, is a misdemeanor under New York State law. See, N.Y. Agric. & Mkts. Law § 353. New York courts have held that intentionally causing extreme pain to a pet fish is a felony. See, *People v. Garcia*, 29 A.D.3d 255, 257, (App. Div. 1st Dept.). In spite of this prohibition, commercially farmed aquatic animals live in filthy, barren tanks so overcrowded they can barely swim and where they are victims of disease outbreak, rough handling, and months to years of psychological deprivation.

**Would you support legislation to establish minimum animal welfare standards for**





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**procurement of aquatic animal products by city agencies relating to the following production practices?**

- YES** Extreme overcrowding
- YES** Barren tanks unlike their natural habitats
- YES** Deprivation of food for several days during transport
- YES** Being slaughtered while fully conscious

Additional Comments:

#### **4. Protecting and Coexisting with Urban Wildlife**

##### **A. WildlifeNYC**

New York City is home to an immense diversity of urban wildlife. Our five boroughs are home to hundreds of species, including geese, deer, squirrels, ducks, raccoons, opossum, coyotes, hawks, eagles, whales, dolphins, seals, turkeys, beavers, bats, pigeons, rats, migratory birds, and so many more. While many animals inhabit New York year round, other species pass through on their annual migrations. The City has initiated a program, WildlifeNYC, aimed to promote awareness, tolerance, coexistence, and understanding of the wild critters we are so fortunate to share our city with.

**Will you support funding for the continuation and expansion of New York City's WildlifeNYC program?**

**YES**

Additional Comments:

##### **B. Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation**

New Yorkers often come in contact with injured wildlife and have no idea what to do. There is only one brick and mortar wildlife rescue facility in New York City, the Wild Bird Fund. There is no centralized administration of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, or reliable information for what New York City residents should do when they encounter injured wildlife. Because of the limited information on the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's website, independent volunteer licensed rehabilitators are called upon to respond to emergencies and provide care to wild animals in need on a near daily basis. There is much more that New York City can do to support this vital service.

**Would you support increased city funding for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation facilities and services?**

**YES**



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**Would you support establishing city-funded wildlife emergency response units as an alternative to untrained police officers responding to such situations?**

**YES**

Additional Comments:

**C. Canada geese in NYC parks**

After the 2009 “Miracle on the Hudson”, Mayor Bloomberg set forth on a policy of hiring USDA Wildlife Services, a federal agency notorious for inhumane wildlife killing practices, to exterminate Canada geese and goslings in New York City parks. This policy was always wrongheaded. Mayor de Blasio was elected on a promise to pursue alternative non-lethal approaches to Canada goose management. The current administration cancelled the contract with USDA Wildlife Services that compensated USDA to kill geese, instead opting for a non-lethal form of population control known as egg oiling. However, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which leases and controls the city’s airports, has continued to contract with USDA to exterminate geese, and Mayor de Blasio has allowed the Port Authority and USDA to access city parks to do so. USDA Wildlife Services has killed hundreds of geese in New York City parks every summer for the past 10 years, decimating the local population. The regional population of Canada geese is significantly reduced and should now be stabilized exclusively through non-lethal management practices going forward.

**Will you call for a complete end to killing of Canada geese in New York City parks, and demand that the Port Authority and USDA Wildlife Services pursue exclusively non-lethal methods of wildlife management in areas within the City’s jurisdiction?**

**YES**

Additional Comments:

**D. Staten Island Deer**

In the past decade, white-tailed deer have taken up residence on Staten Island, believed to have swum across from increasingly developed areas of neighboring New Jersey. The City first responded by implementing conflict reduction efforts, including measures like increased traffic signage, a reduction of the speed limit, and the inclusion of white-tailed deer in New York City’s [WildlifeNYC program](#) aimed at educating New Yorkers about coexistence and tolerance with urban wildlife. In May 2016, the City took a bold and unprecedented step of implementing a non-lethal deer management program that sought to stabilize the deer population by performing vasectomies on bucks. Over the past few years, vasectomies have been performed on more than 1,500 bucks that have stabilized and reduced the total deer population and have reduced conflicts caused by their presence.



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Despite these encouraging results, some have pushed for a "controlled hunt" of Staten Island's deer. Controlled hunts require killing some number of deer every year, which often leads to a bounce-back effect that ultimately increases the population. In addition to the cruelty involved, annual culls are unlikely to achieve any long-term reduction in the deer population or actually address any of the conflicts associated with their presence.

**Will you support continuing the City's deer management program that has successfully stabilized and reduced the population of deer on Staten Island humanely and effectively?**

**YES**

**Will you oppose lethal management of deer on Staten Island, including a "controlled hunt"?**

**YES**

Additional Comments:

#### **E. Raccoons**

Even though the incidence of rabies has been [extremely rare](#) in New York City, with only one human case over the last 50 years, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) requires that any raccoons brought to Animal Care Centers (ACC) be immediately euthanized, regardless whether they are sick or injured or healthy. Every year, hundreds of healthy raccoons are brought into ACC, usually by police officers responding to nuisance complaints, and killed instead of being assessed and potentially released or rehabbed.

**Would you join VFAR in calling on the DEC to allow healthy raccoons to be rehabilitated and/or released when suitable?**

**YES.** I think we have to look at this issue comprehensively. I would prefer that racoons be released in areas that are not close to the urban setting if possible. There may be local ordinances outside NYC that would limit release outside the confines of NYC. I am concerned because racoon scat can be highly toxic and gets mixed in with dirt near residences. The increasing prevalence of racoons in local backyards exposes children who are playing to this toxicity. We need a better way to deal with the racoon population for sure, and I'd like to discuss this with you further.

**Would you support establishing alternative protocols for emergency responders such that healthy raccoons are not brought to ACC?**

**YES.**

Additional Comments:



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## **F. Rats**

Historically, rat control invariably relies on cruel and imprecise extermination methods - poison bait, glue and snap traps, and more recently dry ice and drowning devices. Needless to say, these methods have failed to achieve lasting impacts on New York's total rodent population for decades (if not centuries). The Department of Health's Rat Academy [public education](#) on nonlethal rat management methods, debuting nearly 10 years ago, has been shown to be effective. [Feral cats](#) are also a potential way to manage rat populations.

**Would you support a comprehensive humane rat control program that would be focused on prevention, deterrence and infrastructural improvements?**

**YES**

Additional Comments:

## **5. Animals Used for Fashion: Fur**

Fur farms breed and confine animals in tiny, filthy cages where they suffer intense stress and unimaginable cruelty. They are beaten, bludgeoned, electrocuted, and skinned alive. Trapping animals in the wild is no better — animals are trapped in cruel leg hold traps where they can suffer for days in excruciating pain — starving, until a trapper returns to shoot or bludgeon them to death. Coyotes are known to attempt to chew off their own legs trying to break free. Many other animals are unintentionally caught and killed in these traps, including household pets. California has enacted a ban on the sale of fur. Several countries such as Norway, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Japan, and the U.K. have taken steps to close fur farms, and Israel is on the verge of [banning the entire fur trade](#). With public awareness and innovative alternatives on the rise, many popular designers have stopped using all animal fur. There are ethical alternatives to fur which are not only stylish and warm but environmentally friendly. More info [here](#).

**Would you cosponsor and vote for [Intro 1476 \(Johnson\)](#) that would ban the sale of new apparel products using real animal fur?**

**YES**

Additional Comments:





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## **6. Animals Used in Entertainment:**

### **A. Carriage Horses**

Advocates have long called out the poor working and living conditions for horses used for NYC carriage rides. Despite common belief, the horses do not live in Central Park, they are forced to travel through NYC traffic to get to and from Central Park. Despite improvements implemented over the years, the horses are often made to work long days - sometimes in extreme weather conditions, and they can go weeks without any opportunity for daily turnout. Over the course of the past three decades, there have been countless incidents and accidents involving New York City carriage horses. As recently as March 2020, a [12-year-old horse named Aisha was euthanized after collapsing in Central Park](#), a tragic incident that was captured on video camera by a horrified pedestrian. Many horses have died on the streets of NYC or been sent or sold to slaughter once they are unable to continue working. Carriage horse operations have resumed after a temporary hiatus for COVID-19.

**Would you cosponsor and vote for legislation to ban horse carriages in New York City?**

**YES**

**Would you cosponsor and vote for legislation to enact stronger protections for all working horses in New York City, including a mandatory retirement age and restrictions on sales of exhausted horses to “kill buyers”?**

**YES**

Additional Comments:

### **B. Rodeos**

While New York State has limited the use of animals in circuses and other entertainment, rodeos have been left unregulated despite the display of similar, and in many cases more egregious, acts of cruelty. Rodeos typically include an event called “calf roping” where baby calves are shocked with electric prods, forcing them to run as soon as the holding chute opens, only to be “clotheslined” with a rope and tied at the legs. Panicked calves are routinely injured or killed during these performances. Rodeos also continue to use flank straps or bucking straps, which are tightly fastened around the animal’s abdomen and may be used with sharpened spurs to cause pain to the animal, encouraging them to buck more violently. Rodeos are responsible for causing death or serious injury to countless animals, all for the sole purpose of entertainment and showmanship.

**Would you cosponsor and vote for legislation which would prohibit these practices at rodeos?**

**YES. I have co-sponsored the state-level version of this initiative.**

Additional Comments:



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### **C. Captive Wildlife, Zoos and Aquariums**

The Bronx Zoo currently has two wild-born female Asian elephants, Happy and Patty. Happy, has been confined alone for over fourteen years in a small enclosure that contains a one-acre outdoor yard, barren corrals, and an industrial holding facility. In the winter months, when it's too cold for her to be outside, she is confined to an industrial cement structure that is lined with windowless, barred cages. Happy has been documented engaging in unnatural behavior indicative of distress and suffering. Scientists who are experts in elephant cognition and behavior have attested that the Bronx Zoo cannot meet Happy's biological and psychological needs. There has been a longstanding campaign for the Bronx Zoo to close its elephant exhibit and send Happy to an elephant sanctuary.

**Would you join VFAR and other advocates in demanding that the Bronx Zoo close its elephant exhibit and release Happy and Patty to an elephant sanctuary?**

**YES.** Yes, I am aware of the plight and the court case surrounding Happy and it is apparent that she belongs in an elephant sanctuary. Having spent much of my youth at the Bronx Zoo and being introduced to these intelligent, wonderful animals in that setting, I would like to see if there is a proposal you have for educating the public about elephants and their care, perhaps through a virtual educational component with an elephant sanctuary or another approach.

Through extensive study and observation, scientists have found that elephants are self-aware, autonomous animals. In other words, they are cognitively, emotionally, and socially complex beings who have the capacity to exercise free will and make choices about how to spend their days and live their lives, just as human beings do. The right to liberty protects an individual's autonomy and ensures that she cannot be imprisoned (held in an environment that deprives her of her autonomy) or exploited (displayed, used for entertainment, or forced to breed).

**Would you support legislation that would recognize and protect elephants' right to liberty?**

**YES / NO** Unsure, and I'd appreciate discussing the topic with you further.

Additional Comments:



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*Joanne Simon*

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CANDIDATE SIGNATURE

December 6, 2020  
DATE